

BRANCHING OUT

Creating Connections to End Sexual Violence

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Until we meet again...

By Terri DeWalt



As most of you know by now, after working at Sexual Assault Services (SAS) for 12 years, I decided to leave the program to start on a new professional adventure. The decision was very challenging for me as SAS, and the staff and volunteers who make it the amazing program that it is, have been a huge part of my life, for most of my adult life. However, it came to a point when I felt like I needed a new challenge, and I also wanted the program to have the opportunity to spread its wings under new leadership. As a result, I accepted a position as a Psychologist & Training Director in UW- Whitewater's Counseling Center. In this new role I have the opportunity to provide counseling to the students who attend Whitewater and direct the training program for graduate interns who are

working in the Center. I am also happy to be able to continue my work in the anti-sexual violence field as a member of the campus Sexual Assault Prevention & Intervention Committee.

Over the years at SAS I developed meaningful relationships with many of you, and leaving the Racine community has also been challenging for me. I have appreciated all of the support you have given me, SAS, and the survivors of sexual violence in our community over the years. The work that you do in partnership with SAS helps to make sure that the sexual assault survivors in our community receive the sensitive, compassionate and effective care and services that they deserve, and that the sexual offenders who commit these heinous acts are held responsible. This is important, life changing work. As we all know, each of us who has contact with a sexual assault survivor, whether in a professional, or a personal role, has the ability to impact that person's healing process. A caring, sensitive, non-judgmental response to a survivor will decrease the likelihood that she or he will develop symptoms of PTSD, and increases the likelihood that she or he will want to report and cooperate fully with the criminal justice system. Those first moments you have with a survivor impact her or him more than you may realize, and those moments have the power to change the course of his or her future. This is work that I was honored to be a part of for as long as I was, and the work that I am confident will continue to thrive under Katy Adler's capable leadership.

I was thrilled when Katy was selected to serve in the role of SAS Manager. For those of you who don't know, Katy was originally hired in July of 2008 to fill my role during the year I was completing an internship in Minnesota. During that year she was able to jump right in as the new person in an already established program and lead it with competence and thoughtfulness. I was exceedingly grateful to be able to keep her on our team when I returned

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Legislative Update

By Vicki Biehn

The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA) creates a Legislative Agenda for each legislative year, and this year WCASA is continuing to work on increasing the state funding for Sexual Assault Service Providers (SASPs) and passing legislation that will guarantee that victims/survivors will be allowed to have an advocate accompany them as they go through the process of receiving medical care, reporting the sexual assault, and attending court proceedings. At this time I would like to update you on these important legislative issues that concern sexual assault survivors.

The first issue that WCASA is addressing with our state representatives is increasing the state budget allocation for SASPs in the state. The Sexual Assault Victim Services (SAVS) grant program is the sole state allocation of resources to provide sexual assault services in our local communities. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis to local SASPs, counties or tribes that offer a number of important services, including: 24/7 crisis response including hospital accompaniment, systems advocacy (including court accompaniment), prevention activities, and fostering community collaborations and partnerships to enhance services for sexual assault victims. SAVS had been funded with the Crime Victim and Witness Assistance Surcharge—an amount paid by those convicted of certain crimes. Due to a precipitous drop in surcharge revenue over the last couple of years, SAVS grants were reduced by about 30 percent in 2012 from 2011 levels (from roughly \$2 million in 2011 to \$1.4 million in 2012). These cuts, along with significant increases in demand for sexual assault services, have resulted in the creation of waiting lists for counseling, fewer prevention activities, and in some cases, the closure of a local service provider. When Governor Scott Walker submitted his budget in February of 2013, he requested \$2 million dollars annually for the SAVS grant, which would restore the funding to the 2011 level. Although more funds are needed to provide sexual assault services to all victims in our state, this was an improvement over the bi-annual budget for SAVS. In Governor Walker's budget he also asked that these funds come from general purpose revenue and not from the Crime Victim and Witness Assistance Surcharge. This is quite a significant improvement in how SAVS has been funded as it will create a more consistent and stable funding source for the SAVS grants. I am happy to report that this new budget and new revenue source was approved by the legislature and Governor Scott Walker did sign this bill into law in June of 2013.

Another issue that WCASA is still working on is a bill that would enact victim accompaniment legislation. This bill would allow a survivor to be accompanied by an advocate during various stages of the criminal justice process, including the sexual assault forensic exam, law enforcement interview, and court proceedings, if the victim wishes to have an advocate present. Currently, victims do not have this right and sometimes the victim is not allowed to have an advocate be there to provide support. We believe that providing emotional support and information to victims during the criminal justice process helps to restore some of the victims' sense of control over their lives and helps to keep them engaged in the criminal justice process. A result of the victim staying engaged in the criminal justice process is that more offenders will be held accountable for their crimes. This bill is the priority of this upcoming legislative session for WCASA. A bill has been introduced with bipartisan support, but no hearing has been scheduled as of this writing.

Finally, WCASA also desires to establish an annual reporting system of data related to sexual assaults. They believe that public policy decisions should be based on evidence and on data derived from reliable sources that are clearly understood. Unfortunately, there is a lack of data consistently produced related to sexual assaults in Wisconsin. To more accurately examine the criminal justice system response to sexual assault, a wider variety of data would be needed than is currently readily available. Data regarding arrests as well as prosecution and conviction rates for sexual assault crimes would greatly enhance the ability to gauge the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. By examining trends in the criminal justice system, we will be able to derive an indication of the ability of our state to hold perpetrators of sexual assault accountable. This data may also highlight areas where further work is needed in improving the system's response to sexual assault. This information could also serve an important function in the prevention of sexual assault by providing the context in which we examine the impact of this public health problem on our state. By providing a greater understanding of the reality of sexual assault and its impacts, we begin the process of changing the community norms and attitudes that allow sexual assault to be perpetrated. WCASA's aim is to work with the relevant state agencies and authorities to establish a reliable and consistent data reporting system concerning sexual assault crimes that can regularly inform policymakers and the public alike. This legislation is in the beginning stages and it will be some time before an actual bill will be introduced to the Wisconsin State Legislature.

If you would like to be added to the WCASA action alert email list, please contact Vicki Biehn at vbiehn@lsswis.org or Ian Henderson at ianh@wcasa.org. This is an email alert list that sends out information occasionally about upcoming legislative issues and asks you to contact your state or federal representative and request for them to either support or not support an upcoming bill. Please use this link to find out who your representative is: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/Pages/waml/aspx>.

--Vicki



Meet Annabell

Hello, my name is Annabell Bustillos. I am the newest member to SAS. I was hired to be the Bilingual Outreach Advocate. My role in this position is to provide services to survivors and their support people who only speak Spanish. I feel that by being able to provide services in Spanish we are able to eliminate one of the many barriers that Spanish speaking survivors face when seeking services.

Along with the advocacy role in my position there is also the Outreach component. For this role I plan to focus on reaching out and creating connections with groups and organizations that are already working with or would like to work with the Hispanic and Spanish speaking community. I think it is important to make our services well known so that Spanish speaking survivors, as well as all other survivors, know that SAS is a place to come and find support.

The services that I am able to provide to survivors include personal advocacy, legal advocacy, and medical advocacy. I also help staff our 24-hour crisis line and hospital response team. I am also available to do presentations to community based organizations and churches. As well as trainings/in-services to law enforcement personnel, medical professionals, members of the educational system and community service providers on the unique cultural needs of the Hispanic/Latina sexual assault survivor.

A little about me...I have many years of experience working with Hispanic and Spanish speaking people in the Health Care field, working first at Health Care Network then Racine Community Health Center and also working as a Spanish interpreter for the hospitals in the Racine area. I plan to bring this knowledge and experience to this position and help provide services to survivors and their support people.

If anyone has any questions or would like to learn more about having a presentation done please contact me. Annabell Bustillos: 262.619.1634 ext. 14 email: Annabell Bustillos@lsswis.org

—Annabell



Until we meet again...

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from my internship in 2009. Since that time her knowledge and expertise about our program and serving sexual assault victims has increased tenfold. More recently Katy filled in my position again during the times when I was on maternity leave, and once again did so with skill and dedication. It is with the knowledge that she is there to help lead our team of highly capable and committed staff and volunteers that I know SAS will continue to grow and prosper. I look forward to seeing all of the great things that SAS, and you, our community partners, will be able to accomplish in the future.

Thank you all for all that you do day in and day out to help make our community a better place. Please feel free to stay in touch; my new work email is dewaltt@uww.edu.

Take care,

—Terri



Meet Tracey

Hello Everyone! Tracey Golden here; I am an Alverno College graduate student who is grateful for the opportunity to intern with Sexual Assault Services. My professional experience ranges from military service to boutique management. As a new member of your team, I look forward to working with you to support and empower those we serve.

—Tracey



Helping Hands

By Katy Adler

At SAS, we recognize how valuable the work and support of our Volunteer Advocates really is. Our team of Volunteer Advocates allows us to continue to meet the ever-increasing need for services in the community.

In the past, we have interviewed our Volunteer Advocates who answer the crisis line and/or respond to the hospital. In this issue, the spotlight will be on one of our unique volunteers, our Volunteer Family Advocate. Lauren Peterson came to SAS in October 2012. She had moved to Racine and was looking for somewhere to volunteer. Luckily for SAS, we were one of the programs she called. Lauren is currently in graduate school at Loyola University, working toward a Masters in Social Work.

Lauren helps out at the Racine County Child Advocacy Center (CAC). At the CAC, Lauren meets with caregivers whose children are being interviewed as potential victims of crime (i.e., child sexual or physical abuse), or potential witnesses of a crime. Lauren gives families support and information about available resources in the community.

What do you think makes a person a good SAS Advocate?

Allowing yourself to be vulnerable and emotionally available for people.

What is the most rewarding part of being a SAS Advocate?

Being a part of the healing process in such a gruesome and traumatic time for families. It's very rewarding to be an advocating force and positive light for people when their circumstances are so dark.

What is the most challenging thing about being a SAS Advocate?

Probably the most challenging thing about working at the CAC would be not taking the stress or pain I naturally feel for people home to my husband. When you help others and bear weight and advocate for them in the midst of their struggle, it can be challenging to "leave it at the office." And really, for those clients with whom I deeply connect, I don't know that it is really possible to completely do so. Families that I encounter at the CAC are often (like all of us) already entrenched in many areas of trauma and stress (abuse, financial strains, relationship issues, mental health struggles, etc.), and then when you add the possible abuse of a child or family member, it can be devastating. I struggle with wishing I could do more for them than my time and resources allow.

Do you volunteer with any other community groups or agencies?

I help facilitate a Spiritual Support Group at the Women's Resource Center as well as work as an MSW intern at NAMI Racine. We are currently getting ready to launch a peer support group for high school students with Depression, Bi-Polar, and Anxiety as well as hopefully starting a support group for those struggling with Eating Disorders.

What are some of your other interests and hobbies?

I love spending time with my awesome husband, pretending to be a fitness buff every once in a while, being active in my church, sipping lattes, and spending time outside.

Would you like to share anything about your family in general or how you being a SAS Advocate has affected your family?

It has definitely enriched my family! I feel like anything that stretches my heart and my ability to empathize is a valuable deposit into my relationships with everyone I am close to.

—Katy

Sexual Assault Services is offering an open group for Adult Women Molested as Children and Adult Survivors of Sexual Assault

This is a continuation of a recently concluded closed group for adult women molested as children. New participants will need to schedule an orientation session before attending for the first time.

The group will meet at:

1220 Mound Ave., Suite 304
Racine, WI 53404

Dates and time of group:

Monday evenings from 5:30 - 7:00
October 14th
November 11th and 25th
December 9th and 16th

For more information or to register a client for the group, please call Vicki Biehn at (262) 619-1634 or (262) 763-6226 x109

The group is free of charge.



Family Advocate

By Samantha Sustachek

Many myths surround child sexual abuse, and one of those myths is so-called “stranger danger.” We teach children to be wary of adults they do not know, and we teach them to go to a trusted person, often a family member, if they feel uncomfortable in any situation. But what if a family member is making a child feel uncomfortable? Unfortunately, many children are sexually abused by a parent, sibling, or other relative. When I meet with caregivers whose child has been victimized by a family member, they often feel that their situation is an unusual one, but according to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, more than half of all children who experience sexual abuse are abused by a parent or other relative. Although sexual abuse at the hand of a family member is not uncommon, it does add an extra layer of emotion to the situation. Child sexual abuse has effects on the child victim, the family as a whole, and the parents or caregivers, but intra-familial sexual abuse often intensifies these effects and adds in new effects and emotions that may not be present when the relationship between a family and the abuser is not close.

Effects on Child Victims

Children are taught to trust and rely on adults, especially the adults in their families, to protect them. When an adult family member chooses to harm a child instead, this is understandably confusing for the child. Children no longer know who to trust and who to tell. They often blame themselves for the abuse (even more so than when the abuser is not a family member) thinking they must have done something to cause a loved one to victimize them. Children also know that disclosure of the abuse is likely to have a negative impact on the rest of the family. For all of these reasons and more, children are even less likely to disclose abuse by a family member than they are abuse by someone outside the family. Even if they do disclose, it often takes longer for them to tell someone.

Recantation is also common after a disclosure of abuse by a family member. Children may doubt or blame themselves or fear the abuser. They may not like the effect the disclosure had on the family and may try to “fix” it by changing their stories or “taking it back.” Children may also feel pressure to recant if they are not receiving adequate support from non-offending family members. When children recant, this does not necessarily mean they were lying about the abuse in the first place. More likely, they just want things to go back to normal.

Effects on the Family

Sexual abuse within a family system puts a great amount of strain on many family relationships. Family members may struggle to believe the victim, not wanting to believe that the abuser is truly capable of what he/she did. Family members may take sides or feel pressured to take sides or even struggle with divided loyalty between the offender and the victim. This is especially true when the offender and victim are siblings. Tensions may arise among family members who are bound to have differences of opinion about everything from family loyalty to responsibility to forgiveness.

Mothers whose spouses or boyfriends abuse their children face some special challenges. They often have to try to stand up for their children in the face of family members who maintain a relationship with the abuser, refusing to believe the abuse occurred. Others face the loss of friends and acquaintances who do not want to be associated with the partner of a child abuser. Economic hardship is another real possibility if the mother was financially dependent on the abuser.

Coping and Moving Forward

When a child first discloses abuse by a family member, non-offending parents and caregivers often go through a range of emotions including shock, anger, confusion, denial and disbelief. Many parents go through a period of doubting their child, because they do not want to believe that someone they loved and trusted would hurt their child. Others blame themselves or feel guilty that they could not prevent the abuse and protect their children.

It is important to remember that the support of non-offending parents and caregivers is instrumental in the recovery process of a child who has experienced abuse. Children who are supported, believed, and protected can, over time, go on to live perfectly happy lives.

—Sam

This article is based on The National Child Traumatic Stress Network’s handout, “Coping with the Shock of Intrafamilial Sexual Abuse.” For more information, see their website at www.NCTSN.org.

SAS Program Statistics

January-June 2013

Crisis Line Calls.....	109
Racine Hospital Visits.....	44
Burlington Hospital Visits.....	2
Legal Advocacy Sessions.....	25
New Counseling Clients.....	35
Counseling Sessions.....	412
Community Presentations.....	753
CAC Appointments.....	102



Sexual Assault Services
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Contact Us!

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Racine, WI 53404
262-619-1634

SAS Burlington Office
480 S. Pine St.
Burlington, WI 53105
262-763-6226 Ext. 109

24 Hour Crisis Line: 262-637-SAFE (7233)

Website: <http://www.sasoflss.org>

Stay Connected!



Join our News and Events email update list! Would you like to receive information on upcoming SAS events and volunteer opportunities? Email Samantha Sustachek at ssustachek@lsswis.org with "SAS news and events" in the subject line and she will include you in all SAS news and events related emails.

Sexual Assault Services seeks to create a safe and compassionate environment to help promote the healing of sexual assault survivors and their support people.

Sexual Assault Services is funded by United Way of Racine County, Victims of Crime Act grant, Sexual Assault Victim Services grant, Violence Against Women Act grant and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault.